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Lincoln's Masterpieces.

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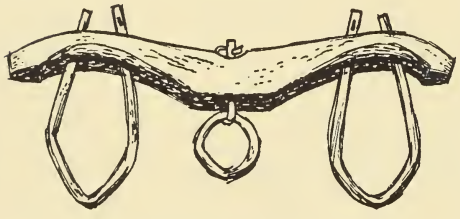

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The Writings of Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln's Masterpieces

By

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Abraham Lincoln's career is of perennial interest to the world because it represents a high personal achievement accomplished under severe difficulties. Such an achievement, entirely possible in a democracy, excites admiration among every generation of men. So significant is his position in history that we preserve every scrap of his writing, trivial or important, and perpetuate every tale or tradition that promises to add to our memorial of the man and his performance. For many, his utterances on public questions have become as touchstones of political wisdom. There are grounds also for believing that had the circumstances of his life fallen in more favorable ways, he might have become as distinguished in the field of letters as he was eminent in statesmanship. These reasons are to be found within that large body of letters, addresses, and state papers,

The fame of the Gettysburg Address has subjected it to the most untiring scrutiny for possible antecedents of ideas and phrasings. Especially has the oft-quoted last clause of the Address invited search for parallels. Herndon found among Lincoln's papers, left in the law office at Springfield after his election to the Presidency, a pamphlet containing a sermon delivered by Theodore Parker, at Boston, July 4, 1858. The sermon contains the following sentence, marked in the margin: "democracy is Direct Self-Government, over all the people, by all the people, for all the people." In another place in the sermon, substantially the same phrasing is marked in the Lincoln copy. Lincoln's fine words may have been reminiscent of his reading of Parker's sermon. Eight years before (1850), Parker had used virtually the same description of democracy in a speech before the New England Anti-Slavery convention. Webster, in his second speech on Foot's Resolution, January 26, 1830, had used substantially the same language. It is possible to trace similar phrasing elsewhere, as far back as the preface of Wycliffe's Bible (1384). Mr. Isaac Markens, of New York City, in "Lincoln's Masterpiece," privately printed, exhibits a few interesting resemblances between Everett's Oration and Lincoln's Address at Gettysburg, and points out that although Everett sent his Oration to Lincoln before the dedication took place, the "parallelisms may be explained as mere coincidences." Whatever may be the

antecedents of the great Address in Lincoln's mind, he gave to the idea a character as literature as truly as Shakespeare created literature out of the originals of the "Merchant of Venice" and "Hamlet."

The Gettysburg Address

DELIVERED AT THE DEDICATION OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY. NOV. 19, 1863

Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us —that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

The Second Inaugural marks the high water level of Lincoln's individuality in preparing a state paper. It is far removed from the conventionality usually employed on such an occasion. It embodies the feeling and language of religion with remarkable freedom. It illustrates brilliantly the character of his own mind and heart, and affords an example of his ability to trust and divine the soul of the people he addressed. His fine humility was united with great dignity and frankness. His love of direct thought was linked up with an unusual appreciation of good taste in speech. The Address is a perfect revelation of the man and his widened horizon as he emerged from the darker days of the rebellion. He had grown greater in the midst of tragic experience. His poise had become even firmer, and his outlook spiritually refined. He had lent himself nobly to the perfection to be found in suffering.

The Second Inaugural

WASHINGTON, MARCH 4, 1865

Fellow Countrymen: At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and prayed to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered—that of neither has been answered fully.

The Almighty has his own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue

until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequitted toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nations wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

The Constitutional Edition

of

The Writings of Abraham Lincoln

including
the full text of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates
together with
the Essay on Lincoln, by CARL SCHURZ,
the Address on Lincoln, by JOSEPH H. CHOATE,
and the Life of Lincoln, by NOAH BROOKS

Edited by

Arthur Brooks Lapsley

With an Introduction by

Theodore Roosevelt

The Publishers of the Writings of the Founders take pleasure in calling attention to this edition of the Writings of Abraham Lincoln, forming a set of eight volumes. The works of Lincoln hold a deservedly high place in American literature and the CONSTITUTIONAL EDITION was planned with the object of presenting them in a handsome library edition, at a moderate price.

Theodore Roosevelt found himself personally interested in the undertaking, and prepared for the set

a Foreword in which he presented for Americans of the Twentieth Century, his estimate of the character of Lincoln and of the nature of Lincoln's service to his country and to mankind.

The CONSTITUTIONAL EDITION also contains the Essay on Lincoln by Carl Schurz and the Address by Joseph H. Choate. Mr. Schurz gave a brilliant critical estimate of Lincoln and fixed his position in history. Mr. Choate's address was one of the most important tributes to Lincoln's greatness. In sympathetic and graceful language he described the character and the deeds which made Lincoln "One of the great benefactors, not of his own country alone, but of the human race."

One volume of the set is devoted to the Life of Lincoln, by Noah Brooks, which has been accepted as the standard biography of Lincoln, presenting in compact narrative a sober, discriminating record of Lincoln's public services and private life.

The Writings of Lincoln cover his public addresses, letters, and other documents, together with a large number of more personal letters and speeches.

The editing of this important set was entrusted to Mr. Arthur Brooks Lapsley, a graduate of Harvard University, and a student of American history. Besides his scholarly knowledge, Mr. Lapsley brought to this work, what the publishers considered even more essential, an intelligent enthusiasm for the subject.

The Editor was able to secure for this edition, from Historical Associations and through the courtesy of private collectors, certain interesting and important material not before brought into print in book form.

The Editor contributed to the first volume a brief preface defining the purpose of the Edition, explaining the arrangement which has been followed and emphasizing the great value and significance of Lincoln's Writings. He has supplied occasional brief footnotes throughout the text which, without making the work pedantic, or introducing a jarring note, will elucidate difficult passages and call the reader's attention to interesting facts.

At the close of his biography, Mr. Noah Brooks gives an appreciation of Lincoln, which is the more valuable because Mr. Brooks wrote from the point of view of a personal acquaintance. "The author of this brief biography has imperfectly carried out his purpose if he has failed to show how the character of Lincoln was developed and shaped by his early training; how he was raised up and fitted, in the obscure seclusion of humble life, by the providence of God, for a special and peculiar service; how he became the type, flower, and representative of all that is worthily American; how in him the commonest of human traits were blended with an all-embracing charity and the highest human wisdom; and how, with single-hearted devotion to the right, he lived unselfishly, void of selfish personal ambition, and, dying tragically, left a name to be remembered with love and honor as one of the best and greatest of mankind."

The growth and development of Lincoln's mental power and moral force, of his intense and magnetic personality, after the vast responsibilities of government were thrown upon him at the age of fifty-two, furnish a rare and striking illustration of the marvellous capacity and adaptability of the human intellect —of the sound mind in the sound body. He came to the discharge of the great duties of the Presidency with absolutely no experience in the administration of government, or of the vastly varied and complicated questions of foreign and domestic policy which immediately arose, and continued to press upon him during the rest of his life; but he mastered each as it came, apparently with the facility of a trained and experienced ruler. As Clarendon said of Cromwell, "His parts seemed to be raised by the demands of a great station."

His life through it all was one of intense labor, anxiety, and distress, without one hour of peaceful repose from first to last. But he rose to every occasion. He led public opinion, but did not march so far in advance of it as to fail of its effective support in every great emergency. He knew the heart and thought of the people as no man not in constant and absolute sympathy with them could have known it, and so, holding their confidence, he triumphed through and with them.

Not only was there this steady growth of intellect, but the infinite delicacy of his nature and its capacity for refinement developed also, as exhibited in the purity and perfection of his language and style of speech. The rough backwoodsman, who had never

From the Address by Joseph H. Choate

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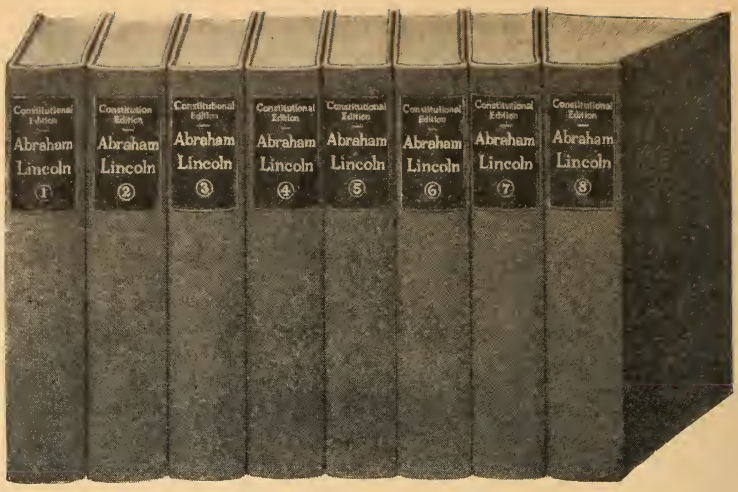

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